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DEPARTMENT FOR PA, NEA/ARN, INR/IC/CD, INR/R/MR:STHIBEAULT AND
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SUBJECT: Syria/UAE, Syria/Netherlands, Syria/Sudan,
Syria/Kazakhstan, Lebanon, Iraq, Palestinian Territories (7/16)

¶1. Summary: Syrian papers on July 16 reported that President Sheikh Khaifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan of the United Arab Emirates arrived in Damascus July 15 on an official 2-day visit. He made a statement upon arrival expressing satisfaction with cooperation in recent years in the economic, trade and investment fields and with the outcome of meetings of the Joint Ministerial Committee. He noted that this visit will be an important opportunity for consultations with President Asad on the latest developments in the Arab region and for discussions on regional and international issues.

Papers also reported President Asad's meeting on July 15 with a delegation representing the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Dutch Parliament, headed by Henk Jan Ormel, Chairman of the committee. President Asad clarified to the delegation Syria's position regarding the situations in Iraq, the occupied Palestinian territories, Lebanon, the peace process and Syrian-European relations.

Members of the delegation reiterated the importance of dialogue with Syria because of its pivotal role in the region and highlighted Syria's efforts to achieve stability in the region. The delegation also conferred with FM Mouallem on July 15. Talks focused on relations between Syria and the Netherlands and the role of the parliaments of both countries in enhancing these relations. Talks also dealt with recent developments in the Middle East, particularly in Iraq and Palestine. Members of the visiting delegation expressed their appreciation of Syria's efforts in hosting Iraqi refugees and its role in establishing security and stability in the region.

In a statement to SANA, Ormel described his talks with Syrian officials as "distinguished and very good," and praised Syria's role in regional issues. He also pointed out Syria's stability, saying, "It would be a good thing if this state of stability would spread to the entire region."

Independent Al-Watan cited "Western diplomatic sources" as saying that some members of the Dutch parliamentary delegation met with HAMAS representatives in Damascus. The sources said the meeting "was not welcomed by all the members of the delegation, especially in light of the European isolation of HAMAS, and specifically

because some of those who participated in the meeting are affiliated with the ruling coalition."

Papers also reported the visit to Damascus of Kazakhstan's Minister of Industry and Trade, Galym Orazbakov, who met FM Mouallem on July 15. Talks dealt with bilateral relations and recent developments in the Middle East and Central Asia. Following the meeting, Orazbakov told SANA reporters that his talks with FM Mouallem discussed means to strengthen relations between the two countries and to prepare for President Asad's visit to Kazakhstan later this year.

On Syrian/Sudanese relations, papers reported that the Assistant Secretary General of the Baath Party, Abdullah al-Ahmar, met on July

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15 with Sudanese National Congress Secretary for Foreign Relations, Kamal Obeid. Talks dealt with regional developments and bilateral relations and means of enhancing them. Al-Ahmar confirmed Syria's support for its Sudanese brothers in confronting foreign pressures and interference in its internal affairs, and in seeking a solution to the Darfur crisis through dialogue among Sudanese parties.

End of summary.

12. Selected Headlines:

"President Sheikh Khaifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan of the United Arab Emirates arrives in Damascus on an official 2-day visit to Syria. Sheikh Kalifa Bin Zayed: This visit will be an important opportunity to consult with President Asad... We are satisfied with joint cooperation" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 7/16)

"President Asad clarifies Syria's position on regional developments to a delegation representing the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Dutch Parliament. The Dutch delegation: Dialogue with Syria is very important since it has a pivotal role in the region" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 7/16)

"Abdullah al-Ahmar, Assistant Secretary General of the Baath Party, discussed with Sudanese National Congress Secretary for Foreign Relations Kamal Obeid the situation and developments in the region and current relations between the two parties and means of enhancing them" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 7/16)

"FM Mouallem discusses developments in the Middle East and Central Asia with Kazakhstan's Minister of Industry and Trade, Galym Orazbakov" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 7/16)

"Crash of an F-16 warplane in Iraq. The White House rejects Republicans' call for withdrawal" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 7/16)

"US Democratic Presidential nominee John Edwards: America needs Syria and Iran to cement stability in Iraq" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 7/16)

"The Lebanese army tightens siege on strategic positions in Nahr al-Bared. The Paris conference concludes deliberations without a final communique. Kouchner heads to Beirut on July 28" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 7/16)

"Abbas confers with Olmert today. The Israeli occupation suspends pursuit of 180 Fateh activists" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 7/16)

"Bush in Poland today to discuss the missile shield, ignoring the Russian alternative for a solution" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 7/16)

13. Editorial Block Quotes:

"Are We at a New Stage in French Policy?"

Ilyas Murad, Chief Editor of government-owned Al-Ba'th, wrote

(7/16): "We are approaching a new French policy that is more independent and less subservient to American policy...."

"The French people were annoyed with the foreign policy that President Chirac pursued, a policy that adopted personalization at the expense of the people's interests."

"France's new approach to the Lebanese issue and the French chief of staff's harsh criticism of US policy in Iraq are evidence of a new French policy under President Sarkozy.... But we still see some confusion in French positions.... We wonder if there are two administrations or two policies in France.... An example of this confusion is the contradiction in the position toward Hizbollah and the fact that the criticism of American policy was not paired with a clear practical position.... We wonder if it is the American interference and pressure that confuses the French positions.... Americans have always been willing to destroy France's relations in the region, as this would strengthen their own influence...."

"The new French administration must put the French wagon back on its normal track and build relations with the countries of the region on the basis of justice, equality, and mutual interests...."

"The Palestinian View and Required Solution"

Ibrahim Shugyar, a columnist in government-owned Al-Ba'th, wrote (7/16): "Palestinian divisions help Israel implement its plans and perpetuate occupation and allow the Israeli government to overcome its political crisis as the final report of the Winograd Committee is about to be released...."

"Palestinians must draw conclusions from what happened in Gaza and return to a serious national dialogue to correct the mistakes and serve the higher interests of the Palestinian people, not the narrow interests of this faction or that...."

"Barriers and Agendas"

Maha Sultan, a commentator in government-owned Tishreen, wrote (7/16): "The world community remains silent on the suffering of 6,000 Palestinians who have been stranded at the closed Rafah crossing between Egypt and the Gaza Strip for more than a month...."

"In two days, Condoleezza Rice will be in the region with only one item on her agenda: Making sure that the Palestinian-Palestinian split is still on and heading to the point of no return. She will visit the West Bank but not the Gaza Strip, so as to stress her support for this team against that and to give Israel the time it needs to use the stranded people on the Rafah crossing to blackmail the Palestinian parties. After Rice, Tony Blair, the new envoy of the Quartet, will visit Israel and the region. Since his appointment, he has not uttered a single word giving hope that the suffering of these Palestinians and the suffering of other Palestinians at the more than 700 Israeli checkpoints in the West Bank and Gaza will come to an end...."

"Arabs, for their part, can do nothing to overcome the Israeli rejection, while Palestinian leaders still have priorities different from the priorities of the Palestinian people, priorities that are determined by personal interests and ambitions...."

"Rudeness or a Slip of Tongue?"

Ali Nasrallah, an editorialist in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (7/16): "It is natural for Americans to set their own objectives in

Iraq and to rely on American forces to achieve them, but it is unacceptable that they expect Iraqis to achieve these objectives for them....

"US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said that the Iraqi government continues to work to realize the security, political, and economic objectives that the Congress has set.... Has the insolence of the occupier these days reached a point where it publicly announces its objectives in such a way? Has it reached the point where it publicly and unashamedly tells lies, at times talking about a model of democracy in Iraq and at other times torpedoing these claims through such statements? Or was Rice's remark a slip of the tongue requiring accountability?

"Most likely this is insolence. For Rice previously said, during the Israeli aggression against Lebanon a year ago: What we are witnessing are the birth bangs of a new Middle East...."

"Bush's Veto and Deferment in Announcing Defeat"

Muhyi-al-Din al-Muhammad, a columnist in government-owned Tishreen, wrote (7/16): "The situation in Iraq is bad on the political, military, security, and livelihood levels. This situation is a reflection and one of the direct results of occupation. The withdrawal of US forces, therefore, will definitely lead to remarkable and direct progress on all these levels, while the continuation of the occupation of Iraq will make things worse....

"This is not only the view of nationalist Iraqi forces and regional powers that care about Iraq's security and stability, but also the reading of the American congress....

"President Bush's insistence on the use of his veto against any democratic decision made jointly by a majority of the Democratic and Republican parties and calling for the withdrawal of American troops from Iraq will not make the situation in Iraq better. On the contrary, it will increase American losses and negatively affect the United States' reputation, prestige, and interests...."

"A War of a Different Kind"

Ahmad Dawwa, a commentator in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (7/16): "The region is facing not only a military war with the United States, Israel, and their allies, but also a war of another kind, the tools of which are locals who live among the sons of the region and speak their language. It is the war of twisting facts, distorting reality, and misleading people."

"One of the Arabic speaking television channels hosted one of the tools of this war. The aim was to convince the viewers that Israel and the United States are protecting the Syrian regime!

"People like this interviewee go too far in their hostility toward Syria. We wonder how one can say that the United States is protecting those against whom it applies the strongest pressure and imposes sanctions.... This is a brazen and ridiculous attempt by these tools, who are deeply involved in the American plan, to cover up their cooperation with the enemies of Arabs and pave the way for the New Middle East plan....

"The fact that the tools of the American plan are revealing themselves in such a flagrant way and desperately defending this plan shows their bankruptcy and sense of approaching danger. No matter how long it takes, their fate will not be better than the fate of [Antoine] Lahd [leader of the defunct pro-Israel militia in south Lebanon] and his ilk."

Corbin